

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Huebsch Linen & Uniform

Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center

New Facility Layout Gives Huebsch A Fresh Start

Client Profile:

HUEBSCH was founded over 101 years ago to provide laundry services, and has since diversified into the manufacture, rental, and leasing of customized uniforms, mats, and towels for restroom facilities. The company is located in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and employs less than 100 people.

Situation:

HUEBSCH had four different facilities performing different functions, and the arrangement was proving to be a logistical nightmare. With the aim of bringing everything and everybody back into one building to cut expenses and function off one boiler, HUEBSCH decided to combine its operations into one new building. The company wanted to take advantage of the move to modernize its facilities by employing manufacturing cells. HUEBSCH contracted with the Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center (NWMOC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance in cellular plant layout and flow training.

Solution:

NWMOC met with representatives from HUEBSCH and discussed a cellular plant layout that flowed smaller batches of clothing to the washing machines. As the whole laundry industry in the United States is currently moving toward large batch automation, the opportunity to be part of a concept which has never been tried in a commercial laundry facility in America before was a challenge. After discussing the logistics of how many washing machines would be required, what size they should be, where the mending cell would be located, and how smaller batches of clothing would flow through the plant, NWMOC worked out take times for each of the processes and provided HUEBSCH with a general blueprint from which to work, along with a flow chart. Once the plant was built, NWMOC provided training to HUEBSCH employees to help them understand the concepts and terminology of "flow manufacturing." This unique concept of going to smaller batches of clothing with lower capacity wash machines has resulted in improved worker efficiency, fewer errors, improved materials flow, a decrease in operating expenses, and increased customer satisfaction.

Results:

Reduced the two-day process by 50 percent.
Reduced loading time by 1.5 hours per truck per day.

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Increased throughput from 71 to 83 pieces per hour.
Reduced number of processing steps.
Increased value-added activity.
Improved customer satisfaction.

Testimonial:

"The Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center made this whole concept a reality for us. We really didn't know if this was going to work for us or not, but NWMOC gave us the confidence to go ahead and make this happen."

Mary Steinke, Operations Manager